

Testimony of Eric W. Gjede
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Before the Committee on Labor and Public Employees
Hartford, CT
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**Testifying In opposition to HB 5080 AAC Large Retail Stores and Employment of Workers During the
Holiday Season**

Good afternoon Senator Winfield, Representative Tercyak, Senator Hwang, Representative Rutigliano and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. My name is Eric Gjede and I am assistant counsel at the Connecticut Business and Industry Association (CBIA), which represents more than 10,000 large and small companies throughout the state of Connecticut.

A number of surveys released in the past year consistently ranked Connecticut as one of the highest cost and least business-friendly states. While this state has many virtues, the perception that Connecticut is a bad place to do business has gone nation-wide. Businesses pay attention to these surveys, and many make the choice to locate or grow their business elsewhere. This negative perception denies our citizens many job opportunities that could have helped advance their careers.

The period between Thanksgiving and Christmas is when many retail businesses finally begin to show profit. Taking any action that will increase labor costs, which leads to prices increases, will only serve to suppress sales at Connecticut businesses while boosting sales elsewhere. In a small state like Connecticut, it is far too easy to run across the border to shop or just purchase your goods online.

Additionally, this bill ignores the fact that many people volunteer to work on holidays. Contrary to the presuppositions this bill makes, many people enjoy working on these holidays – particularly those earning tips or commissions.

We encourage the committee to take no further action on this bill, and to pursue legislation that will bring more businesses, jobs and opportunities to Connecticut.